

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 156556 TOSEC 050102

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, US

SUBJECT: U.S. STANCE TOWARDS INDIA; PRELIMINARY VIEWS

REF: NEW DELHI 8557 (EXDIS)

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM SISCO

1. WITH YOUR CONCURRENCE, PROPOSE TO RESPOND TO NEW DELHI 8557 AS FOLLOWS:

2. YOUR MESSAGE IS RIGHT ON TARGET IN TERMS OF THE POSTURE YOU RECOMMEND IN THIS EARLY STAGE AFTER MRS. GANDHI HAS CRACKED DOWN ON HER POLITICAL OPPONENTS AND SUSPENDED DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS AND PROCEDURES. DURING THIS INITIAL PERIOD, WE AGREE THAT THE U.S. SHOULD AVOID ANY ACTIONS WHICH WOULD UNDERCUT THE BASIS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF INDO-AMERICAN RELATIONS WITH EITHER MRS. GANDHI OR A SUCCESSOR REGIME.

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3. MUCH AS WE REGRET HER MOVES TO CURTAIL INDIA'S

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS, WE HAVE NO REAL CAPACITY AND ARE NOT DISPOSED TO TRY TO AFFECT EVENTS. GRATUITOUS USG CRITICISM OF MRS. GANDHI'S ACTIONS MIGHT PROVIDE PSYCHIC PLEASURE, BUT WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE DEEPLY RESENTED BY HER,

INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE U.S. WOULD BECOME A WHIPPING BOY, AND IMPAIR EFFORTS TO DEVELOP MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY RELATIONS OVER THE LONG HAUL.

4. WE ALSO AGREE THAT WE SHOULD REVIEW OUR POSTURE PERIODICALLY AS THE SITUATION UNFOLDS. SHOULD INDIA BECOME INCREASINGLY AUTHORITARIAN, THE NATURE OF INDO-U.S. TIES AND EXCHANGES COULD ALTER. FOR THE TIME BEING AT LEAST, IT SEEMS WISEST TO DEFER JUDGMENT ON THE FUTURE SCOPE FOR BILATERAL COOPERATION.

5. REGARDING CURRENT OPERATIONAL QUESTIONS, WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD CONTINUE THE PREVIOUSLY AGREED PATTERN OF JOINT COMMISSION ACTIVITIES, NAMELY THAT WE LEAVE THE INITIATIVE TO THE INDIANS AND NOT GET OUT AHEAD OF THEM. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT SUBCOMMISSION MEETINGS SHOULD NOT BE SCHEDULED UNTIL AFTER THE JOINT COMMISSION MEETS. ANY PLANS FOR NEW ACTIVITIES SHOULD OF COURSE BE REFERRED TO THE DEPARTMENT.

6. ON THE QUESTION OF THE PRESS LINE, WE AGREE WITH YOU AND ARE STICKING WITH A STRICT "NO COMMENT" STANCE. ONLY COMMENT MADE THUS FAR HAS BEEN A LOW KEY WHITE HOUSE AND SUBSEQUENTLY STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN EXPRESSION OF REGRETS OVER IMPOSITION OF PRESS CENSORSHIP. WE ALSO MADE A PROTEST THROUGH INDIAN EMBASSY HERE OVER EXPULSION OF WASHINGTON POST CORRESPONDENT LEWIS SIMONS.

7. ON OFFICIAL TRAVEL, WE CONCUR WITH YOUR RECOMMENDATION AND WILL REVIEW TRIPS TO INDIA ON CASE BY CASE BASIS, SEEKING EMBASSY VIEWS WHEN DEEMED NECESSARY.

8. PEACE CORPS HAS ASKED FOR YOUR ADVICE REGARDING 23 PEACE CORPS PERSONNEL SERVING IN OUTLYING AREAS. ARE THEY IN ANY DANGER FROM LOCAL DISTURBANCES? AS SEEN FROM CONFIDENTIAL

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HERE, THERE APPEARS NO NEED FOR ANY CHANGE IN OPERATIONS, BUT WE WOULD LIKE YOUR VIEWS. ALSO, WE ARE NOT CLEAR WHAT YOU MEAN THAT YOU ARE LIMITING USG SPONSORED PROGRAMS IN OUTLYING AREAS (PARA 3, REFTEL). PLEASE ELUCIDATE. IN GENERAL, WE WOULD LIKE TO PURSUE PROGRAMS IN A NORMAL ROUTINE WAY. APPROVE DISAPPROVE INGERSOLL

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